

Zizeeria knysna Trimen (*lysimon* Huebner)
(Lep.: Lycaenidae): an Additional Species of
Butterfly to the Maltese Islands

By GUIDO BONETT*

On the 12th March, 1978, while taking part in a bird ringing session with two other members of the Malta Ornithological Society at Ghadira Pool in the north-west of Malta, I happened to catch a glimpse of a small butterfly (Lycaenid) which I had unintentionally disturbed, fluttering flimsily close to the ground along the low scrub which is characteristic of the locality. Being a keen lepidopterist and an intimate friend of Mr. Anthony Valletta (who is in this respect my tutor), I could not miss the strange flight pattern and behaviour of the specimen, something which induced me to have a closer look. Fortunately the butterfly had alighted amidst a clump of Golden Samphire (*Inula crithmoides* L.) a few feet away from where I stood, and I had no difficulty in getting very close to it.

At first I was struck by the light pale fawn colour of the underside and had the impression that I was looking at an aberration of the Common Blue (*Polymatus icarus* Rott.). I suddenly realised that I did not have my net and other collecting equipment with me, so I had no alternative but to try and catch the specimen with nothing but my bare hands! Luckily this proved to be easy as the butterfly seemed unwilling to fly, probably due to the fact that it was still only 8.45 a.m. and the temperature was too low to induce much flying about. Soon afterwards, with my unidentified catch in a matchbox, I was on my way to Birkirkara. Since I live only a few minutes walk away from Mr. Anthony Valletta's residence, I went straight over to show him my catch. Moments later I was being told that one of my greatest ambitions had been fulfilled — the butterfly I had taken was a new species to the Maltese list, the African Grass Blue, known scientifically as *Zizeeria knysna* Trimen (*lysimon* Huebner). A female.

One of the interesting features of the specimen is its very good condition. It is not frayed at all and gives the impression of a newly emerged butterfly. Because of this observation the locality has since then been visited a number of times, always with the hope of encountering another specimen to support the theory of a brood of this butterfly breeding in the area. It should be noted that the habitat here (according to *The Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe* by L. G. Higgins and N. D. Riley) is very suitable for the species, being damp and moist; it is at sea level and both *Medicago* and *Oxalis*, which are foodplants for the species, are abundant. Unfortunately no other specimens have been seen.

There could be three concluding factors for such a negative result: (a) Since the weather in February was very mild, sometimes hot, the specimen I had taken was one of the last to emerge from the first brood which had already

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passed its prime. (b) So, if this butterfly is breeding on the island, it may appear again as a second brood later on — we have to wait and see. (c) Fantastic as it may seem for such a small species, the specimen taken is an immigrant from either North Africa, Morocco-Algeria, or from Southern Europe.

Acknowledgement

Mr. Anthony Valletta for his constant help.

References

- Higgins, L. G. and Riley, N. D., 1970. *A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe*.
 Kirby, W. F., 1889. *European Butterflies and Moths*.
 Manley, W. B. L. and Allcard, H. G., 1970. *A Field Guide to the Butterflies and Burnets of Spain*.

DEILEPHILA ELPENOR L. IN ARGYLL. — While staying at Lochawe, Argyll, in June, I was shown a specimen of the Elephant Hawk, *D. elpenor* L. by the landlady of the local public house. The moth had apparently flown into the bar, together with another of the same species, on 17th June, 1978 and become entangled in a spider's web. As far as I can ascertain, this is the most northerly record of the species on the west coast of Scotland. — F. B. S. ANTRAM, Valley Farm, Wissett, Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 0JJ.

CACOECEIMORPHA PRONUBANA HUBNER (LEP., TORTRICIDAE): A GREENHOUSE PEST.—At the beginning of June I was delighted to see a profusion of flowers on the grape-vine which I had nursed from infancy in my little greenhouse. The flowers duly opened and I looked forward to seeing the plant's first grapes developing as the petals dropped. No grapes, however, appeared and on closer inspection of the dropped petals, I saw that they were not petals but frass from nearly full-fed larvae of the handsome little Tortricid moth *Cacoecimorpha pronubana* Hübner.

The entire inflorescence of the vine's two "rods" had been stripped, while little or no attention had been given to the foliage. I fear that this is the reward for kindly restraint in the use of insecticides in my greenhouse, and I do not propose to be so tolerant next season.

I think that *pronubana* is the world's champion "polyphag", having more than 100 foodplants recorded against its name. — S. N. A. JACOBS, 54 Hayes Lane, Bromley, BR2 9EE. 26.vi.1978.

CORRIGENDA

Vol. 89, No. 12 (Dec. 1977), back cover, line 26 up, for "British List" read "Irish List".

Vol. 90, No. 4 (April 1978), p. 113, last line of title, for "Kbm." read "H.-S."

p. 125, line 13, for "uncommon" read "unknown".